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# Leningrad 1941: the Blockade

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Dmitri V. Pavlov

Pavlov, Dmitri V. *Leningrad 1941: the Blockade.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. 186 p.

This small book is a vivid and exciting story of how the citizens of Leningrad survived the German siege of the former Russian capital during the early days of World War II when the Nazi juggernaut, flushed with innumerable victories, was sweeping across the Russian plains. In almost every page of this book, the author presents an almost incredible amount of facts, figures, and statistics of the most intimate kind, relating to the almost unbelievable difficulties of attempting to maintain the life of a metropolitan city when it has been deprived of the normal means of obtaining foodstuffs, fuel, and power for light and energy. The city of Leningrad encompassed about 2,544,000 persons when its last land connections with Russian-held territory were severed by the Germans on 8 September 1941. Two and one-half years later, when the siege was completely lifted, an estimated 632,000 Russians had died of hunger, cold, and related dystrophic causes. This figure is distinct from deaths due to purely military causes, such as German bombing and shelling. Nor do these figures include the battlefield casualties. Unofficial estimates of the total Leningrad dead run in the area of 1,000,000. These statistics alone give to the siege of Leningrad a unique position in the history of modern warfare.

The story of Leningrad's heroic ordeal is presented as an unpretentious, almost unadorned report, based very largely on the author's own observations. He writes not as a cool and distant observer, but as an angry individual, proud of the Russian soldier and citizen but somewhat cynical of the errors, stupidities, and shortcomings of the rear echelon politicians and administrators. Pavlov does not gloss over many of the dark episodes in Leningrad. He does not pretend that all Leningraders were heroes. He describes incidents of black marketing, and of theft and forgery of ration cards; he comments on the terrible hardships imposed upon the civilians by the strict rules enforced in November and December when, because of the enormous frauds that previously had prevailed, it was made almost impossible to obtain a new ration card if one was lost or destroyed. Loss of the card then became virtually a sentence to death from starvation, because scanty as the rations were, they were the only source of food. The author also presents a realistic picture of the disorganization which attended the establishment of the Lagoda Ice Road and the enormous difficulties which had to be overcome before it was made to work with the required efficiency.

He makes it plain that if the Soviet Army had not recaptured the vital Tikhvin rail junction, Leningrad would have starved to death as the Nazis intended that it should. Stalin's apparent antipathy toward Leningrad showed itself in the savage intrigues and plots which he directed against various leadership groups in the city and in the variety of measures, administrative and otherwise, by which he sought to reduce the prestige and importance of the former Russian capital. It is typical of the value of Pavlov's book that this instance of Stalin's interference with Leningrad's defense arrangements had never been publicly mentioned until reported in his book.

To the Western world, and to history, Pavlov's major service has been the writing of this book on the siege of Leningrad, one of the epics of man's experiences in war.

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Taber, Robert. *The War of the Flea.* New York: Stuart, 1965. 192 p.

*The War of the Flea* is a short, easy-to-read work on the "wars of liberation" in the world. "The record stands," says the author, "no colonial war has yet been lost by a colonial people, once entered into." He cites Ireland, Israel, and French Morocco as examples of shortcuts to freedom: lots of publicity, little spilling of blood, and finally, freedom through political persuasion. Cyprus, Algiers, and French Indochina, on the other hand, were on a grander scale and more costly; but they followed exactly the same pattern. Yet there have been three failures in the war of the flea: the Huks in the Philippines, the Chinese in Malaya; and the Communists in Greece. The Huks were beaten at their own game by Magsaysay and never regained their guerrilla status. The Chinese in Malaya were not *of* the people and therefore received no popular support. The Communists in Greece turned against the people and lost their support. A successful revolution must have full popular support—what the author calls the "bandwagon effect." The Huks lost it, the Chinese in Malaya never had it, and the Greek Communists threw it away. Insurgency, if truly *of* the people, cannot fail, says Robert Taber. After describing the completely successful, worldwide wars of liberation, the author warns the United States that it is being cast in the role of "counterrevolutionist" and that it is "slowly moving into a worldwide conflict which it cannot win."